

Environmental Committee Meeting 24th March 2025

Civic & Support Officer Report

LAND AT FAIRFIELD ROAD

At the request of the committee, the Civic & Support Officer requested an onsite meeting with preferred contactor NJL Boxgreen to quote for meadowing the area, after it was discovered that the land is an easement for multiple services and incompatible for other planting schemes previously investigated by the Council.

During the site visit, Rose of Boxgreen noted the high presence of ground elder. Ground elder is a fast-spreading perennial weed that can be difficult to remove, forming dense mats of foliage and outcompeting other plants. If the ground elder is not dealt with in the first instance correctly, it will take over the meadow eventually.

While ground elder is not destructive like bamboo or Japanese knotweed, when in the wrong place it spreads quickly and it can realistically only be managed with multiple applications of weedkiller, which is not environmentally friendly and would go against our biodiversity policy. Another option would be invasive digging that would not be appropriate at this location due to the services under ground. The following options were supplied by the contactor.

Outcome:

Officers recommendation with knowledge supplied by contactor, that due to the high levels of ground elder and other fast spreading plant varieties such ivy and limited options/ budget available for removal, this land is not appropriate for a wildflower meadow due to its cost implications.

Basic quote supplied:

Glyphosate – we would blanket spray the entire area to ensure the plants take the chemical through the leaf down to the roots.

When the foliage has died back, we would strim then rake & remove all arisings. Further applications most likely will be required to manage the re-emergence of the leaf.

Spraying £260 + vat to spray, strim & clear. £50 + vat each time to spray re-emerging has not fully died off.

Digging – the plants and the rhizomes can be dug out by spade or ideally (due to the size area requiring clearing) with the use of a digger, making sure to remove as much of the soil so as to not disturb the roots.

There are 2 issues with this method:

a) removing enough soil and not leaving behind any fragments of the roots would require a number of skips and it is unlikely all roots will be removed resulting in the need to spray re-emerging foliage; new soil will need to be imported onto the site which will have cost implications.

b) By removing the soil and roots and disposing of these, then aids in the spread of ground elder elsewhere.

Removal by digger & replace soil £4200 + VAT

Smothering – cover the entire area with cardboard or weed mat and spreading a thick layer of bark mulch on top and replenishing as needed blocking all light, this process will take a number of years.

Smothering – using non-woven weed mat & cover with bark chip (cheaper than bark mulch) £3585 + vat - a lot of prep work would need to be done to do this option

Turfing – re-turfing the area could possibly act to smother the ground elder however regular mowing would have to happen for a number of years to keep the ground elder from taking over

Turfing - £4715 + vat - a lot of prep work would need to be done to do this option as well!

LAND AT FOSTERS AVENUE

The Civic & Support Officer submitted the request of a cultivation licence and tree planting request to KCC and received an information pack to apply for a structures licence. When completing the form, it was noted that the price per structure (in this case a planter) would be as follows:

For placing of an object/structure:

Payment of a £122.50 Administration fee, a £127.50 Capitalised fee (this is a single payment in lieu of annual licence renewal charges) and £150 Inspection fee (for each 200m in length or part thereof).

For conducting works to, or maintaining, an object/structure:

Payment of a £122.50 Administration Fee and £150 Inspection fee (for each 200m in length or part thereof).

During the process of submitting this application KCC rejected the Town Council's request of tree planting due to the number of cables above the land and below. They did however approve the cultivation licence. The C&S Officer and Operations Officer visited the site for a H&S inspection and to understand why the trees had been rejected when there had previously been trees planted in the location and removed. It was noted that it appeared BT had done further works to the area, creating new trenches on the pathways and adding more phone lines to the pole above, creating a safety issue.

On inspection of the grass areas that had been granted the cultivation licence to meadow, it was noted that where the grass had stopped being maintained by KCC, ground elder and several weed varieties, that were not present during the Town Council's initial site visit during the summer, had taken over the land. As noted by our contactor during a meeting at Fairfield, ground elder would prove difficult to meadow over, therefore this plot of land would only be suitable for grass which requires continuous maintenance.

Outcome:

The C & S Officer discussed the changes on the land with the Town Clerk and Chair of the Committee. Due to time sensitivity that the cultivation of the plot of land was now the responsibility of the Town Council, it was decided that this would not be good use of Town Council budget and the cultivation license be rejected and structures licence not applied for as this is no longer a viable project. A new site was to be investigated. This does not affect the agreed contactors planting contact, as the section was referred to as “new meadow land” in agreed quote.

NEW MEADOW PROJECT- CULMER’S

On investigating new viable plots of land to meadow, the C&S Officer looked at our own land catalogue to avoid expensive changes and long wait times set by KCC. As the budget has already been set aside and agreed in the Contractors maintenance contact, it is a case of finding a new site that would benefit to the town.

Culmers amenity land is currently leased by the Town Council until 2033, has no services under the green areas of the land and is in the centre of town making it an ideal location for a new meadow project. The C& S Officer created a proposal in line with the Town Council’s Action Plan and cleaner, safer, kinder message.

The following was sent to landlords CT10 charities for permission to plant:
This would include:

Seeding a wildflower patch, Planting fruit trees, planting native bulbs in the small woodland/grass area, this would grow the biodiversity in the Culmers area that is currently provided by the allotments but cannot be seen or experienced by visitors. The aim for the project is to create a beautiful slice of native flowering for 3/4 of the year, making the amenity land a stunning place to walk through and enjoyed by everyone.

We would like this to be a project that members of the community can volunteer to help with. Once the initial creation of the wildflower patch is created by the Town Council gardeners and contactors. The Town Council would also organise a community bulb planting day to encourage the local community to help water the area and have a sense of inclusion in a town wilding scheme. (We could also create small goody bags of bulbs and wildflower seeds for those who take part to encourage planting in their own gardens.)

Any press and social media posts advertising this project would also mention that this project is in collaboration with CT10 Charities.

CT10 Charities have confirmed they would be happy with the creation of a meadow and bulbs to be planted in the woodland area. Tree planting is to be discussed at their next meeting in April.

Outcome:

With permission from the Councillors, the C& S officer would like to pursue this

project and confirm with CT10 Charities and the contactor, the start of this project and discuss further use of budget to purchase bulbs for this land and a community project to plant in the autumn months.

BROADSTAIRS IN BLOOM

The C & S officer has been looking at refreshing the current In Bloom Campaign with new projects and rethinking old projects for better community engagement, to come in line with the Town Council's current action plan and motivations.

Business baskets to family planting day:

Whilst last year was our highest number of hanging basket orders for businesses (selling all 120 baskets), it was also the highest number of unpaid, broken and stolen baskets the Town Council has witnessed.

I would like to propose to the Committee a rethink of the hanging basket project, creating a fun, new family friendly activity, which promotes gardening and uses our space at Pierremont Hall. This would also guarantee a return on the budget spent on baskets. (Proposal attached separately.)

Rubbish to Roots:

I would like to propose that Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council team up with Broadstairs Town Team to encourage local residents to use items they would usually see as rubbish and turn them into planting vessels to create a metre of beauty in their homes and gardens. Anything can be a planter!

I would like to propose that the Town Council fund this pilot project supplying seeds, climbing canes and compost if necessary.

The Town Team would lend a helping hand to promote this project, supplying some locally grown seeds and using their seed drives to hand out the seed packs. (Proposal attached separately.)

Gardening Grants:

To continue this project alongside the in-bloom projects, continuing to promote to schools, care homes and organisations.

REFILL / TAPS PROJECT

C&S Officer and Town Clerk had a meeting with TDC heads and managers of departments following a proposal for a new tap site sent by the C& S officer.

The meeting was positive, with discussions of multiple options for a new water tap site, including Balmoral Gardens, Pierremont Park, Broadstairs Promenade and Victoria Gardens.

It was agreed by all parties that Broadstairs and Sr. Peter's Town Council could pay for the tap unit and install however, the maintenance and water costs would be covered by TDC.

TDC are to investigate the back of the disabled toilet next to the bandstand at Victoria Gardens as the install location. TDC operatives will be surveying this area to make sure this is a viable location; the unit would then be installed during TDC's toilet renovation project to minimise cost.

TDC are to send the Town Council a quote for install ASAP.

Refill project:

The first few sticker shave been handed out to businesses, the C&S Officer will continue to push this campaign.

Overview:

Currently BSPTC have a remaining environmental initiatives budget of £4307 left. This is due to be absorbed at the end of the civic year next month if it is not ring fenced or spent.

Do the council wish to buy the water unit before the end of the financial year or ringfence the money to be spent next financial year on a new water tap.

HIP AND TRAFFIC INITIATIVES-

HIP:

The C&S Officer has chased KCC for updates relating to the HIP and Speed watch. The following response has been received from KCC:

“Unfortunately, I don’t have an update for you as yet but these priorities are with P&A awaiting their assessments. Both Planning & Advice and Design & Delivery Teams work on Crash Remedial Measure schemes as a priority for some months of the year and this has been the case so far but I hope that they will be back to working on parish schemes as soon as possible.”

Speed watch:

The Deputy Town Clerk who is leading speed watch and the C & S Officer has chased Speed watch to identify roads that would be viable to start a campaign. No useful response has been received yet.

Working with KCC and Schools:

As reported at the previous council meeting in January, The C&S Officer and Schools Liaison councillor, Cllr Bright attended a virtual meeting where there were many positive discussions of working collaboratively with KCC. Since this Meeting the C & S Officer has invited the safer roads team to attend the community festival on 24th May.

Cllr Bright has attended the youth forum to discuss working with school heads.

It was noted during the meeting with KCC that the C&S officer/ Cllr Bright would contact school leadership teams to attend an event/workshop at Pierremont Hall to educate schools to help them fill out their own action plans and discuss road safety measures near their schools. This is still to be organised and will be pursued in the coming months. As discussed at minute 53.TRAFFIC COMMUNITY OUTREACH on 13th January 2025.

Outcome: The C & S Officer will continue to chase/ pursue KCC and speed watch

